

Teachers' Perception on the Dimensions of Moral Decadence among Secondary School Students in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

Dr. Nkechi C. Njoku

Department of Arts and Social Science Education, Ebonyi State University, PMB 053 Abakaliki, Nigeria

Abstract:

The study deals with teachers' perceptions on the dimension of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ebonyi state of Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey designed which aimed at finding teachers' perception on moral decadence among secondary school students. Ebonyi is the area of the study. Population of the study comprised all the Christian religious teachers in the area which is estimated at 322. 200 CRS teachers were selected for the study using purposive sampling technique. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondent and mean and standard deviation were used to analyse data. The study revealed that there are many forms of decadence among secondary school students in Ebonyi, the causes of the decadence were revealed as well as possible strategies for restoring the problem. Based on the above findings recommendations were made to restore good morals among students.

Keywords: Teachers' Perception, Dimensions, Moral, Decadence,

Introduction

It is amazing to find out that the youths of these days are morally bankrupt. Our society has witnessed a tremendous deterioration in its moral, social and educational values, especially among the youths, (Chima, 2010). However, the issue of moral decadence in our society has become a very controversial issue because the society seemed not to know the disparity between what is morally right or wrong. Ugwu (2010:46) described morality as "the astuteness of one's conduct and behaviour which enhances good conduct and fair relationship. Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) asserted that Morality is collectively upholding of certain beliefs, ideas, values and behaviours, rules and regulations which are considered good, right and acceptable by the society and to which members of the society are bound. Gert (2012), posited that the descriptive definition of morality explains moral as set of conduct put forward by any group; including a society; and the normative definition which is based on the idea that what is moral should have a code of conduct, that is put forward by a society and that it should be accepted as a guide to behaviour by members of that society. Therefore, from the above definitions, morality seems to be a set of code of conducts put forward by any group, society or nation that is acceptable by members of the group.

Odeh (2013) asserted that moral decadence is the failure to uphold sound morality in our society. Muraino and Ugwumba (2014) asserted that moral decadence is the process of behaving in a way that shows low moral standards. It means gross reduction in the moral values in a particular society. Thus, moral decadence appears to be a fall' in the moral standard of the society. It seems to be deterioration or a collapse in upholding our societal values, beliefs, norms and ethical standards.

Bratton of (2010), deemed perception as the process of selecting organizing and interpreting information in order to make sense of the world around us. Agim and Ejiofor (2011), asserted that perception is a belief held by a person or many people, based upon how they see the world around them. Hence, perception appears to be an idea, belief one have as a result of how he sees or understand something.

In addition, Afuye (2015), stated the forms of moral decadence as; cultism, Rape, examination malpractice, Teenage pregnancy, students prostitution, sexual harassment, sale of "Grade" students demonstration, drug abuse, indecent dressing and so on. Idensi (2010) asserted that moral decadence is reported indifferent societies and culture, industrialized world to non-industrialized world and that behaviours denoting immorality such as rape, sexual abuse, drug abuse, school violence and killings have been common among youths and children all over the world.

More so, according to census bureau of 2010, urban area represents densely developed territory, and encompasses residential, commercial and non-residential urban land uses. While rural areas encompass all population, housing, and territory not included within urban area. However, sex the sum totals of structural, functional, and behavioural characteristics of organisms that are involved in reproduction marked by the union of

gametes and distinguish males and females. A male is a man or a boy while a female is having characteristics of girls or women (Mirriam-Webster, 2015). This hydra-headed cancerous menace is not without a cause. Ezaka, (2013), stated that immorality has persisted in our society because many citizens no longer fear God. Idensi (2010), Ihenacho (2010), and Uwaegbute (2013), stated that practical observations have shown that Christianity have identified phenomena like the influence of cultural background, poverty, western education, westernization and urbanization as contributing immensely to moral decadence. Odeh (2013) further stated that the causes of moral decadence among youths can be categorized into (i) social factor, which includes peer pressure, unstable and home environments (ii) Economic factor; which has to do with poverty (iii) Cognitive factor which includes need for belonging among the youths driven by physical needs and psychological needs, (iv) Technological factor, which includes media and internet.

Furthermore, despite the government's attempts at promoting moral uprightness in Nigerian citizens through the inauguration of programmes like War Against Indiscipline (WAI), Independent corrupt practices and other related offences commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to mention but a few, the society has remained morally decayed (Muranio, Abdulkadir and Belgore, 2012). In the other hand, Saheed (2013), stated that there is a dire need to re-orientate the entire populace parents as well as their children, all need to have a new focus. Religious groups too have the social responsibility to reinstate faith in the divine. Religious clerics must through personal conduct rebuild confidence in moral uprightness. The school system must not only inculcate discipline in the students and teachers through counselling, morality must be built into the curriculum for maximum impact. Hence, from the above it seems that inclusion of moral education as a general subject (course) in secondary schools, encouragement of self-control, adequate home training, adequate guidance and counselling and rehabilitation services can proffer solution to moral decadence in our society. In addition, national support to President Muhammad Buhari's fight against corruption can help reduce corruption in Nigeria. Hence, the needs for this study 'the teachers' perception of the dimension of moral decadence among secondary school student in Ebonyi State'.

Statement of the Problem

The society we live in is morally blind, deteriorated and dead. The issue of moral decadence has become very controversial as the society has lost sense of morals. Hence the basic concern of this study, the teachers' perception on the dimension of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ebonyi State is to determine the following; The issue of moral decadence as it affects the secondary school students, which includes the exhibition of such attributes that associates with moral decadence such as prostitution, cultism, disobedience, robbery, cheating in the examination and other social vices. The problem of this study is how to create effective awareness of the dimensions of moral decadence among secondary school students in the society. Also how moral decadence can be controlled by the schools, societies and the nation.

However, the level of porosity and erosion of morality in Nigeria and our immediate society is quite disheartening and unfortunate. Worse still, the youths are the most hit of this evil. Thus, how can those dimensions of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ebonyi State are reduced?

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the forms of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the causes of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ebonyi State?
3. What are the strategies for restoring morality among secondary school students in Ebonyi State?

Results

Table 1: **Mean Response scores on Teachers' Perceived on Forms of Moral Decadence among secondary school Students**

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	Std.	Decision
1.	Examination malpractice	2.8	1.11	Perceived
2.	Cultism	2.6	1.30	Perceived
3.	Truancy	3.2	0.54	Perceived
4.	Drug abuse	2.3	1.11	Perceived
5.	Vandalism of school property	2.8	1.06	Perceived
6.	Sexual misconduct	2.0	1.00	Perceived
7.	Absenteeism	2.0	1.08	Perceived
8.	Illicit affairs between teachers and students	2.7	1.08	Perceived
9.	Indecent dressing	2.8	1.08	Perceived
10.	Dishonesty.	2.2	0.96	Perceived

Grand mean = 2.70

Table 1 observed that there are many forms of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ebonyi State. Items 1-10 obtained a grand mean above 2.50 and it indicates high level of acceptance of the on forms moral decadence in secondary schools in Ebonyi State.

Table 2: **Mean Response Scores on the Causes of Moral Decadences among Secondary School Students**

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	Std.	Decision
11.	Poor home upbringing	2.9	1.02	Perceived
12.	Emphasis on materialism	2.8	1.03	Perceived
13.	Mass media	2.6	0.92	Perceived
14.	Socio-economic status	1.9	1.01	Not perceived
15.	Influence of western education	2.0	1.00	Not perceived
16.	Broken homes	3.0	1.00	Accepted
17.	Influence of peer group	3.2	0.88	Perceived
18.	Decline in religious training	2.5	1.03	Perceived
19.	Poverty	2.3	1.11	Not perceived
20.	Moral laxity at schools	2.7	0.94	Perceived

Grand Mean = 2.60

Table 2 shows that respondents agreed that items listed above on causes of moral decadence is above the criterion mean of 2.50. The table obtained a grand mean of 2.60 which falls within the real limit of agreed the shows that respondents agreed that the items listed above are the causes of moral decadence among secondary schools students in Ebonyi State.

Table 3: **Mean responses of the Teachers' Perceived Strategies for Restoring Morality among Secondary School Students**

S/N	Items	\bar{x}	Std.	Decision
21.	Through adequate home training	2.6	1.14	Perceived
22.	Adequate counseling services for the students	2.7	0.96	Perceived
23.	Serious penalty against moral misconduct among students	1.8	0.96	Not perceived
24.	Through law enforcement agency to checkmate moral misconduct	2.4	1.77	Not perceived
25.	Inclusion of moral education in the school	3.1	1.17	Perceived
26.	Good orientation programme for the students	3.0	0.75	Perceived
27.	By re-orientation on the dangers of materialism	2.9	1.12	Perceived
28.	Encouragement of self-control and discipline	3.6	0.97	Perceived
29.	Through good leadership in schools	3.2	0.05	Not perceived
30.	Avoidance of excessive greed	2.6	1.30	Perceived

Grand mean = 3.60

Table 3 with items 21-30 on perceived strategies for restoring morality among secondary school students shows a grand mean of 3.60 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. The grand mean of 3.60 shows high level of acceptance of strategies for restoring morality among secondary school students.

Summary of the Findings

The findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. That they are many forms of moral decadence prevalent among secondary school students in Ebonyi State.
2. That they are many causes of moral decadence which have been highlighted in the table 2.
3. Suggested teachers' perceived strategies that could restore the situation into normalcy in Ebonyi State if properly applied.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of table 1 revealed that there are many forms of moral decadence among secondary school students in Ebonyi State. The finding is in agreement with Ugwu (2010) who said that many secondary school students indulges in deviant behaviours such as truancy, cultism, sexual assault, absenteeism, indecent dressing, disrespectful and dishonest to mention but a few. The finding is captivating because it goes along to showcase various misconducts prevalent among students.

The result of Table 2 reveals causes of moral decadence to include poor upbringing, emphasis on materialism, decline in religious training and moral laxity as major causes of moral decadence. However, respondents rejected factors like poverty, influence of western education and socio-economic status. This is in agreement with Saheed (2013) that home background training could be a major factor in formation of moral behaviour. For instance, children learn from parents, caregivers, peers and mass media. But most often, if the training they acquire from parents is not strong enough, they could be overshadowed by what they learn from mass media and their peer group.

In this case, parents are encouraged to strengthen the moral behaviour of their children through care, love and soft words so that they will have reasons to conform outside an external force.

The study further revealed various strategies by which moral decadence could be curbed among secondary school students in Ebonyi State. This is in line with Afuge (2015) who said that moral decadence among students is as a result of poor up bringing; and suggested that if parents, teachers and even the society support adequate

teaching of moral education in Nigeria schools, it will curb the malady of moral decadence. The finding is interesting in that the content of moral education curriculum is adequate enough to do with the moral challenges of Nigerian youths in our society.

Educational Implications

- (1) The study reviewed that there would be global poor academic achievement of students if moral decadence is not properly checkmated.
- (2) The number of school dropout would increase tremendously if there is no orientation and re-orientation on the dangers of over emphasis materialism and immorality.
- (3) The study reviewed that moral decadence can create uncondusive and unbearable teaching and learning environment.

Recommendations

- (1) There should be adequate and proper home training for our children
- (2) There should be institutions of counseling services for students in schools.
- (3) There should be inclusion of moral education in school curriculum.
- (4) There should be good orientation and re-orientation programs for students on the dangers of immorality.
- (5) There should be institution of social welfare that should study couples and be sure that they are capable of raising and training children before they are allowed to bear children.

Conclusions

The study identified various forms of moral decadence and causes among secondary school students in Ebonyi State. The causes include inadequate home training, emphasis on materialism, moral laxity, decline in religious training, influence of peer groups and broken homes, and mass media. Solutions to the problem were also highlighted so that the malady of social ills could be reduced to a barest minimum in secondary schools in Ebonyi State of Nigeria.

References

Afuge, A. (2015) Moral Decadence in Tertiary Institution. *Journal of Educational Studies*. 6 (13) 234-245

Bratton, A. (2015) Behaviour, Environment, Fundamental Attrition to Perception. *Journal of Educational Studies*. 4 (1) 51-72

Chima, I.M (2010) Enhancing Morality in Nigerian Youth through Moral Education and Counseling for National Development. *Journal of Education and Management Sciences*. 4 (2) 41-67

Gert, B (2012) Morality. *The Standard Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. 6 p723

Idensi, T.N (2010) Moral Decadence among Youths in Nigeria: Lessons from Apostle Paul. *African Journal of Local Societies Initiative*. 58-63

Muraiwo, M.B & Ugwumba, U.E (2014) *Moral Misconduct among Students of Higher Institutions in Nigeria: A case of Elected Higher Institutions in Imo State, Nigeria*. Owerri: Oasis Publishers

Muraiwo, M.B, Abdulkadir, O.R & Belgore, F.A (2012). Quality of Religion Education in Nigerian Primary and Secondary Schools: Policy, Practice and Implications for Government. *Ataba International Journal of Contemporary Issues*. 1 p187-198

Odeh, J.C (2013) Moral decadence among Catholic Youths in Abakaliki Diocese. *Unpublished Thesis of EBSU*.

Saheed, O.T (2013), Moral Decadence, Causes, Effects and Solution. *Journal of Education and Management Sciences*. 2 (4) 122-144

Ugwu, C.I (2010) Folklore in Igbo Society: A Panacea to the Threat of Home Video. *African Journal of Local Societies Initiative*. 45-51.